

PLEASE AMEND THE CLAIMS AS FOLLOWS:

1. A method of forming a bonding pad that is immune to IMD cracking, comprising:
 - providing a partially processed semiconductor wafer having all metal levels completed;
 - forming a blanket dielectric layer over the uppermost metal level;
 - patterning and etching said dielectric layer to form horizontal and vertical arrays of trenches passing through said dielectric layer such that none of said horizontal trenches completely intersects any of said vertical trenches and separating said dielectric layer into cells such that cracks will not propagate much beyond a cell before being stopped by a trench in order to limit the propagation of any cracks that may form;
 - filling said trenches with a conducting material; performing CMP;
 - depositing bonding metal patterns;
 - bonding wires onto said bonding metal patterns;
 - forming a passivation layer.

REMARKS

The examiner is thanked for thoroughly reviewing the subject patent application. Claim 1 has been amended so that the newly introduced limitation, not having enough support in the Specification, does not occur and the present proposed amendments are believed to not raise the issue of new matter. All claims are now believed to be in allowable condition.